

Using Precision Teaching to Teach Story Telling to a Young Child with Autism

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Story telling is a very important skill for children to have. The ability to recall information as well as to infer, embellish, and make up stories is critical to living as a successful social member of society. This Chart demonstrates the progress one child with autism made in telling both fiction and nonfiction stories.

When we introduced this skill to Jonathan, he was 3 years and 1 month old. He had a diagnosis of high-functioning autism and had begun behavior analytic intervention 10 months earlier. Jonathan received one-on-one instruction, which included Precision Teaching and Direct Instruction for 15 hours each week.

Jonathan began working on Hear Information-Say Story about the Information on May 6, 2004. He worked on this skill for a maximum of 10 minutes each day. Closed circles on the Standard Celeration Charts (SCC) represent Jonathan's frequency of related details said, the open circles represent his frequency of syllables said, the X's represent his frequency of details unrelated to the story, and the triangles represent the number of practices he completed each day charted as frequencies per 16 hours. Each day, Jonathan's therapists set a daily improvement goal for him based on his previous best performance. Jonathan practiced each day until he met or exceeded his daily improvement goal or 10 minutes had passed, whichever came first. The data shown on the SCCs represent Jonathan's performance during the timing in which he expressed the highest frequency of correct responses.

Initially, we described a scenario for Jonathan and he told a story that involved the given information. The scenarios in this initial phase involved a girl at a baseball game, a boy at a farm, and a dog getting a bath. Jonathan had some history with these events through personal experience, books, and previous sequencing work that we had

completed with him as part of his intervention program. Jonathan had very strong reading skills, and we used this strength to help build Jonathan's speaking frequency. In this phase of timed practice, Jonathan's frequency of correct syllables began at 21 per minute and reached 90 per minute within 5 days (less than 50 minutes) of instruction.

The next phase allowed Jonathan to make up a silly story about anything he chose. His syllable frequency grew at x2 over 5 days, reaching 150 per minute. We wanted to increase the number of words Jonathan said in each story, so we next increased the timing interval from 20 seconds to 30 seconds.

At this same time, Jonathan was working on labeling (tacting) and describing emotions separately in his program. We brought these skills into his story-telling work by having Jonathan include how people felt in his stories. He continued to be very successful, even passing a mini (and unplanned) retention check that occurred because his family took a vacation.

Next, we focused on teaching Jonathan to use in his stories information given to him and to expand upon that information in his stories. In this phase, the therapist began a story, using between one and three sentences, and Jonathan embellished upon and completed the story. Again, he reached the frequency aim in only a few days of practice, and we lengthened the timing interval to 1 minute. This change in the length of the timing proved difficult for him, so we changed the timing interval to 45 seconds before again trying a 1-minute timing.

In the next phase, Jonathan's therapists used conversations in their story starters. For example, the therapist would say, "A boy and a girl were playing at a park. The boy said to the girl, 'I like to play on the slide.' The little girl said..." Here, Jonathan was to continue the conversation between the characters in his stories. Previously, Jonathan had learned how to use information to formulate a story and the conversations were not difficult for him, so we changed the learning channel from a Hear-Say to a See-Say. With this new learning channel, Jonathan saw a picture and told a story based on the information he gathered from the picture. Again, his frequency of correct responses dropped very little when we began this phase and it reached the frequency aim quickly, so we moved the Chart into outcomes checks (retention, endurance, stability, and application) to evaluate the fluency of his

behavior.

To evaluate the application of Jonathan's story telling, Jonathan read a story starter and finished the story orally. He matched his previous performance in one timing, and we moved next to a stability check. To check for stability, Jonathan completed one timing away from where he normally worked, and instead completed the timing in the kitchen with the television on so that we could evaluate Jonathan's ability to complete the task in the presence of distractions.

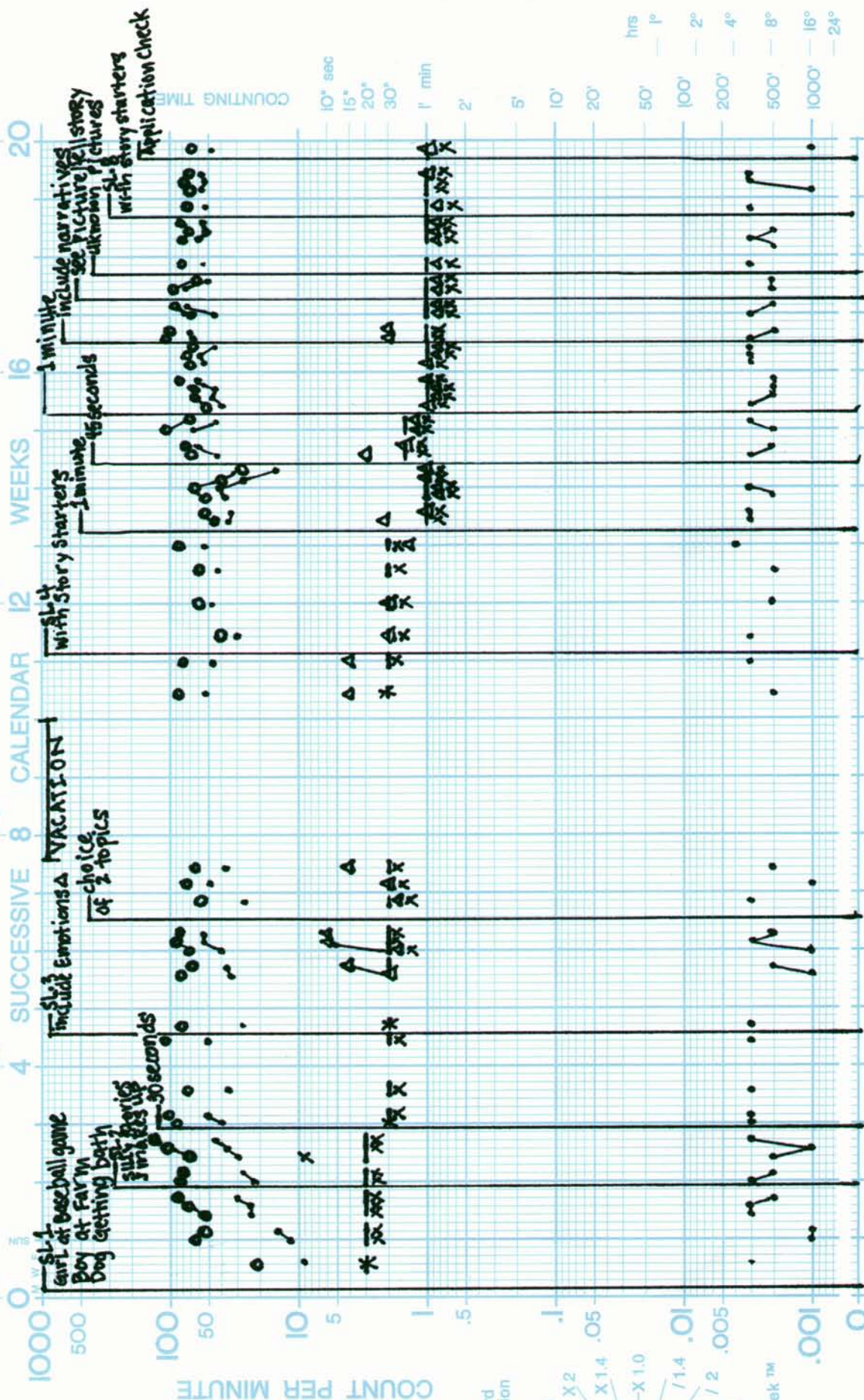
Jonathan matched his previous performance under these conditions, so we tested for endurance. To pass the endurance check, Jonathan needed to match his previous performance when we tripled the timing interval from 1 minute to 3 minutes. Jonathan achieved this on his first timing, so we paused all timed practice on the skill for 4 weeks to evaluate Jonathan's retention of the skill. After 4 weeks, Jonathan matched his previous performance in one timing, and we stopped the Chart. Jonathan is now quite a little storyteller!



19 Sept 04
 22 Aug 04
 25 July 04

27 June 04
 30 May 04

2 May 04



H. Almon M. Fabrizio K. Schirmer B. Abrahamson SUCCESSIVE CALENDAR DAYS Jonathan Z. 3.10 Hear Information/
 SUPERVISOR ADVISER MANAGER TIMER COUNTER CHARTER PERFORMER COUNTED
 Fabrizio Moors Consulting B. Abrahamson B. Abrahamson Say Story About Information

